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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE SITUATION CONCERNING WESTERN SAHARA

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1238 (1999) of 14 May 1999, by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 14 September 1999 and requested me to report to it every 45 days on significant developments in the implementation of the Settlement Plan for Western Sahara (S/21360 and S/22464 and Corr.1) and the agreements reached between the parties, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y del Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), under the auspices of my Personal Envoy, James A. Baker III (S/1997/742, annexes I-III). The report covers developments since my previous report to the Security Council, dated 27 April 1999 (S/1999/483 and Add.1).

II. DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

2. On 18 May 1999, I informed the Security Council of my decision to appoint William Eagleton (United States of America) as my Special Representative for Western Sahara (S/1999/590). The Council took note of my decision in a letter dated 21 May addressed to me by the President of the Council (S/1999/591). Mr. Eagleton took up his responsibilities on 21 May and, before proceeding to the mission area, undertook consultations with my Personal Envoy and senior officials of the United Nations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as representatives of the parties and interested Member States. Upon his arrival at Rabat on 3 June, he was received by the Minister of the Interior, Driss Basri, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mohamed Benaissa, in the presence of the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations, Ahmed Snoussi. On 4 June, he was received by His Majesty the King of Morocco, who confirmed Morocco's support for the accomplishment of his mission. My Special Representative visited the Tindouf area of Algeria on 5 and 6 June, where he was received by the Secretary-General of the Frente POLISARIO, Mohamed Abdelaziz, its Coordinator with MINURSO, Emhamed Khaddad, and other senior officials of the Frente POLISARIO. Mr. Abdelaziz assured him of the Frente POLISARIO's wishes for the success of his mission. Mr. Eagleton then proceeded to MINURSO headquarters at Laayoune before visiting Nouakchott, on

9 June, where he was received by the President of Mauritania, Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, the Prime Minister, Cheikh El Avia Ould Mohamed Khouna, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ahmed Ould Sid'Ahmed, and the Minister of the Interior, Dah Ould Abdel Jelil. The President assured him of Mauritania's continuing interest in the implementation of the Settlement Plan. During his visit to Algiers, from 12 to 14 June, my Special Representative was received by President of Algeria, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the Prime Minister, Smaid Hamdani, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ahmed Attaf. The President confirmed Algeria's commitment to the implementation of the Settlement Plan. The Deputy Special Representative, Robin Kinloch, accompanied Mr. Eagleton on those visits. The newly appointed Chairman of the Identification Commission, Eduardo Vetere, participated in the visits to Nouakchott and Algiers and took up his functions in Laayoune.

A. Identification and appeals

3. In accordance with the protocol and operational directives for the identification and appeals (S/1999/483/Add.1), and in agreement with the two parties, the final programme of identification for the remaining individual applicants from tribal groupings H41, H61 and J51/52, was issued on 1 June 1999. The identification operation resumed on schedule on 15 June 1999, at one centre in Laayoune in the Territory and one in Camp Smara in the Tindouf area. On 21 June, two more centres were opened, at Tan Tan and Goulimine in southern Morocco. The programme is scheduled to be completed in November 1999. As at 24 June 1999, 2,328 persons had been interviewed by the Identification Commission since 15 June 1999, bringing the total number identified since 28 August 1994 to 149,577.

4. With additional identification centres to be opened in the weeks ahead, and with the start of the appeals process scheduled for 15 July, special efforts will be made to increase the staffing of the Commission to required levels by mid-July 1999.

5. A training centre for former and new Identification Commission staff, for which facilities were made available by the Moroccan Government, began its operations at Agadir, on 15 June 1999, with a basic one-week staff training course. Trainees will also spend a week in the Tindouf area for additional training and familiarization with identification operations, before their deployment in the identification centres, where new staff will receive further on-the-job training.

B. Military aspects

6. As at 25 June 1999, the military component of MINURSO stood at 230 military observers and other personnel (see annex). Under the command of Major General Bernd S. Lubenik (Austria), the military component continued to monitor the ceasefire between the Royal Moroccan Army and the Frente POLISARIO forces, which came into effect on 6 September 1991. The MINURSO area of responsibility remained calm and there have not been any indications that either side intended to resume hostilities in the near future.

7. Consultations with the Moroccan authorities were initiated with regard to modalities for the implementation of paragraph 42 of the status-of-forces agreement between the United Nations and Morocco, relating to the carriage of weapons, with a view to formalizing an arrangement to that effect shortly.

8. Pursuant to the military agreements between MINURSO and each party on the marking and destruction of unexploded ordnance and the related exchange of detailed information, a large number of clearance operations have been successfully completed. Both parties continued to extend their full cooperation, with approximately 60 per cent of current tasks west of the defensive sand-wall (berm) and 20 per cent of those east of the berm completed.

C. Civilian police aspects

9. During the reporting period, the strength of the civilian police component increased to 52 (see annex), under the command of Acting Commissioner, Assistant Commandant Sunil Roy (India). Additional contingents are scheduled to arrive within the next few weeks, to bring the strength to its authorized level of 81 officers. The civilian police officers have been deployed to assist the Identification Commission at the four operating centres.

D. Preparatory work for the repatriation of Saharan refugees

10. During the reporting period, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in close consultation and coordination with MINURSO, continued its preparatory work for the repatriation of Saharan refugees as provided for under the Settlement Plan. An agreement was reached with the Moroccan Government, at a meeting in Geneva on 21 May 1999, to undertake a joint reconnaissance visit to the Territory to gather relevant information for planning the return of the refugees, including information on the existing infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, housing facilities and transit centres. This mission is to take place from 23 to 29 June 1999 and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees hopes to undertake a follow-up mission in other technical sectors once the results of the first mission are evaluated.

11. The pre-registration exercise, to ascertain the refugees' willingness to repatriate and to determine their final destinations in the Territory, resumed in the Tindouf refugee camps on 24 May 1999. So far, 12,798 refugees (constituting 1,672 families) have been pre-registered by the Office of the High Commissioner in Camp El-Aiun. Pending the establishment of conditions conducive to safe return, as provided for in the United Nations Settlement Plan and the Houston Agreements, the majority of the refugees continued to express reservations about repatriation to the Territory west of the berm, owing to fear for their security and safety. During this exercise, the Office of the High Commissioner provided refugees with information on its mandate, on the repatriation operation and on its planning so as to enable them to make informed decisions regarding their places of return. The Office also conducted a refugee-needs assessment to gather information on the refugees' personal effects and livestock and to take into account the special concerns of vulnerable groups

such as women and children. The pre-registration exercise is scheduled to resume in Nouadhibou and Zouerate in northern Mauritania in mid-July 1999, at the same time as MINURSO is scheduled to start the identification process at those locations.

12. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has prepared a draft plan of action for its cross-border confidence-building measures aimed at creating confidence and trust within the refugee camps and in the Territory, an action which may help to smoothen UNHCR's ongoing preparatory work and the planning for the repatriation. This draft plan and its time-frame will be presented to the Security Council, pursuant to resolution 1238 (1999), during the Council's informal consultations and, thereafter, to the parties for discussion of the implementation procedures.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL ASPECTS

13. The provision of an additional aircraft needs immediate attention if the aircraft is to be operational in time for the start of the appeals process in mid-July. The training centre at Agadir for incoming Identification Commission staff has alleviated pressure on accommodation in Laayoune. As regards the logistics complex at Laayoune, for which a monthly rent of $12,500 continues to be paid to the owner, discussions have been held with the Moroccan authorities with a view to reducing the rent or identifying a new site to be provided free of charge. Staff training in the Field Assets Control Systems has been completed and mission-wide implementation begun.

14. The General Assembly, by its resolution 53/18 B of 8 June 1999, appropriated the amount of $52.1 million, equivalent to a monthly rate of $4.3 million, for the maintenance of the Mission for the period from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000, including the identification process. Should additional requirements be necessary for the identification and appeals process, I shall seek additional resources from the General Assembly. As at 15 June 1999, unpaid assessed contributions to the MINURSO special account amounted to $56.7 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to $1,556.4 million.

IV. OBSERVATIONS

15. The agreements with the two parties on the resumption of identification process and the initiation of the appeals process are being implemented as planned, with the cooperation of both sides. It is important that both parties stay the course in this regard, in particular with regard to the launching of the appeals process, on 15 July 1999, in conjunction with the publication of the first part of the provisional voter's list. In the face of current recruitment demands from other peacekeeping missions, all efforts will be made to meet the staffing requirements for the process.

16. As regards preparation for the repatriation of refugees, now that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has been able to resume pre-registration in the Tindouf camps and to undertake a joint reconnaissance mission to the Territory, I expect that both parties will extend their full cooperation to enable the Office to complete its preparatory activities and planning, as provided for in the Settlement Plan.

Annex

United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

Contributions as at 25 June 1999

	Military observers	Troops	Civilian police observers	Total
Argentina	1	-	-	1
Austria	5	-	-	5
Bangladesh	6	-	-	6
Canada	-	-	-	-
China	16	-	-	16
Egypt	19	-	1	20
El Salvador	2	-	-	2
France	25	-	-	25
Ghana	6	7	1	14
Greece	1	-	-	1
Guinea	3	-	-	3
Honduras	12	-	-	12
India	-	-	10	10
Ireland	7	-	-	7
Italy	5	-	-	5
Kenya	8	-	-	8
Malaysia	13	-	10	23
Nigeria	5	-	-	5
Norway			2	2
Pakistan	6	-	9	15
Poland	3	-	-	3
Portugal	4	-	9	13
Republic of Korea	-	20	-	20
Russian Federation	25	-	-	25
Sweden	-	-	10	10
Uruguay	13	-	-	13

	Military observers	Troops	Civilian police observers	Total
United States of America	15	-	-	15
Venezuela	3	-	-	3
Total	203	27	52	282

* In addition to the Force Commander.

MOROCCO
ALGERIA
MAURITANIA
Western Sahara
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Tiznit
Sidi Ifni
Tan Tan
Zag
Las Palmas
Tartaya
Laayoune
Smara
Boujdour
Boucraa
Hawza
Al Farcia
Mahbas
Tindouf
Mehaires
Tifariti
Bir Lahlou
Bentili
Bir Mogrein
Guelta Zemmur
Chalwa
Oum Dreyga
Baggari
Dakhla
Mijek
Imlily
Awsard
Agwanit
Zouerate
Dougaf
Bir Gandouz
Techla
Zug
Guerguerat
Bou Lanuar
Nouadhibou
La Guera
Choum
Atar
FHQ MINURSO
ID
SHQ NORTH
SHQ SOUTH
LO
NORTHERN SECTOR
SOUTHERN SECTOR
MINURSO
Deployment as of
June 1999
Medical unit
Medical station
Identification centre
Liaison office
UN team site
Sector boundary
Berm
Paved road
0 50 100 150 200 km
0 50 100 mi
The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
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Cartographic Section